OUR SMILING LAND

Government's Vision for the Protection and Use of Newfoundland and Labrador's Outdoor Resources

GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
July, 1999

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OUR VISION

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians love this land. The people of this Province have a deep and abiding affection for this rocky outcropping in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. We have forged a passionate relationship with the storm-tossed seas which batter our shores, the rich coves and bays of our roots, the dense forests, verdant fields, cloud-topped mountains, and berry-laden barrens and bogs that form the tapestry of our land.

We live on the land and with the land. It is the foundation of our culture, tradition and heritage. It underpins who we are as a people.

We are continuing today the traditions of our forebears. Those who first settled this land made use of it to live and prosper. This history lives in our present.

We fish the waters, hunt the game in our forests, harvest the resources, sow the fields and savour the succulent, sweet fruit of the land. We enjoy the land. We hike wilderness trails, camp in lush open spaces, and swim in the frigid waters of our lakes and ponds.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are wealthier in outdoor resources than all other Canadians. We have easy access to all the natural resources this Province has to offer. Newfoundland and Labrador has more public land than any other province in the country. It is a privilege all residents cherish. It is a privilege Government is committed to preserving, now and for future generations.

OUR MANDATE

The Committee of Ministers and Members of the House of Assembly on the Use of Outdoor Resources travelled throughout Newfoundland and Labrador in the fall of 1998. Chaired by the Minister of Development and Rural Renewal, the Committee consulted with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on the state of our outdoor resources. The Ministers and MHAs heard from hundreds of residents, received numerous presentations and listened to all viewpoints.

The Committee was comprised of the Ministers of Development and Rural Renewal; Tourism, Culture and Recreation; Government Services and Lands; Environment and Labour; and, Forest Resources and Agrifoods; and MHAs for Windsor-Springdale (subsequently Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair), Topsail, and Humber East.

Their aim, on behalf of Government, was to hear concerns and build consensus on how to protect and preserve our outdoor resources while ensuring the continued enjoyment and benefit of the outdoors for all residents of the Province.

The task was complex and required a concentrated, thoughtful approach that examined fully the role of Government in protecting our legacy now and in the future. The Committee is to be commended for the care taken with this considerable responsibility.

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OUR COMMITMENT

Government listened and responded. The uses and benefits of our outdoor resources are for everyone. Accordingly, Government affirms its commitment to ensuring that the common property nature of much of this Province's land will be preserved and that the use of the outdoors will remain an essential part of our heritage and lifestyle, and presents this policy framework.

Declaration of Rights
of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians
to the Use of the Outdoors

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador declares and affirms that it holds the wildlife, fish, game, wildfoods and other natural resources of this province in trust for all citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador to enjoy and that it will ensure that the legacy of these resources will remain for subsequent generations.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador hereby declares and affirms the traditional privileges and freedoms of hunting, angling and the gathering of wild foods by the citizens of this Province. Government further recognizes that citizens have enjoyed and will continue to enjoy the privileges and freedoms of equal and common access to wildlife, fish game, wildfoods and other outdoor resources, subject to proper resource management.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador hereby declares and affirms access to public lands and waterbodies for recreational use including hunting, angling and the gathering of wild foods and that for these purposes the Province's citizens will have clear and open access to a buffer zone around lakes, ponds and rivers.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador hereby declares and affirms that lakes, rivers, and ponds are public resources.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador hereby declares and affirms that the management of the Province's outdoor resources will be a fair and open process.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador hereby declares and affirms that the privileges and freedoms contained in this declaration are subject to the laws of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada and to laws for the purpose of conservation and proper management of all wildlife, fish, game, wildfoods and other natural resources.

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OUR POLICY

Government will establish a Ministerial Council on the Use of Outdoor Resources. The Council will be chaired by the Minister of Development and Rural Renewal and include the Ministers of Forest Resources and Agrifoods; Tourism, Culture and Recreation; Government Services and Lands; and, Environment and Labour. The Council will hold public consultations and will set up working groups to study specific issues where it deems necessary.

Government will direct the Departments of Forest Resources and Agrifoods and Tourism Culture and Recreation, given the demonstrated need for greater public awareness of outdoor resource issues, to prepare a public awareness campaign related to outdoor activities that will include the following initiatives:

1. the development of a web site related to outdoor recreational and hunting issues;
2. inclusion of an outdoor rights section in the annual Hunting Guide; and,
3. undertake a review of existing public awareness programs and implement measures that will increase the general public's awareness.

Government will continue its commitment to sustainable management of inland fisheries resources on the basis of adequate science and appropriate ecological principles. It recognizes that watershed management initiatives must respect these and balance resident recreational opportunities with economic opportunities.

Government will ensure that water bodies are not privatized and that all residents of the Province have equal access to them.

Government will retain decision-making authority, including in respect of licences and fees, in the area of watershed management. In order to ensure that the interests of all residents of the Province are protected, it will not delegate its decision making power to stakeholder groups and communities.

Government recognizes that different river systems are best managed according to their particular requirements.

Government will require only one provincial license for salmon angling. There will be no river specific licence fees.

Government will seek public input on proposed watershed management plans and programs. No organization wishing to participate in the management process will be denied the opportunity to do so, provided it is willing to act in accordance with the ground rules established for the conduct of affairs. Each management group will be required to develop and adopt a consultation plan to ensure that all interested groups have the opportunity to provide input.

Government will not concur with authorization of any new Community Watershed Groups until the federal government concludes a Memorandum of Understanding with the provincial government clarifying the respective government roles. Items expected to be covered in a MOU include science, funding, enforcement and other related items.

Government will, through the Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods, assess the structure of the Inland Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council, including options for appointing members and report back to Cabinet.

Government will, through the Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods, examine current enforcement measures and will work towards increasing the level of cooperation between the different levels of government.

Government will evaluate its enforcement practices with the intent of increasing the effectiveness of enforcement efforts and will establish a unit of enforcement officers that would conduct random enforcement measures throughout the Province.

Government will strengthen regulation and enforcement of laws that prohibit the use of aircraft for hunting purposes.

Government will direct the Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods to submit a proposal to Cabinet recommending a course of action regarding the current ban on the use of the .22 calibre rifle on the Island.

Government will not extend the winter hunt for big game.

Government will develop a more transparent and open policy on the approval of outfitting lodges.

Government will increase the buffer around waterways from 10 to 15 metres for new cottages and public access to waterways must be built into plans for new developments.

Government will proceed with the Natural Areas System Plan (NASP), subject to appropriate consultation.

Government will maintain its core network of 14 provincial parks, seven natural scenic attractions and the Newfoundland T'Railway, and will not lease any additional parks.

Government will amend the Historic Resources Act by the Fall of 1999 to make it illegal to remove fossils from sites found in the Province to ensure that fossil resources in the Province are not destroyed or looted.

Government will allow ATV use for the retrieval of big game with the appropriate regulations being drafted for the next big game hunting season. Restrictions should include: (i) that the ATV is not to be used in an unapproved area until the animal is quartered and tagged; (ii) that a maximum of five trips be allowed to retrieve the animal; and (iii) that no firearms be allowed in the possession of individuals transporting game. As well, a review will be conducted after two years.

Government will focus more attention on enforcing the ban on the use of ATVs including dirt bikes and four-wheel-drive vehicles in sensitive areas such as beaches and sand dunes.

Government will continue to aggressively pursue with the federal government improved science and assessments of the Province's salmon rivers, given the Constitutional responsibility of the federal government to manage salmon stocks.

Government will aggressively pursue with the federal government the development of an adequate plan for science and assessment of the Province's trout stocks, given the Constitutional responsibility of the federal government to manage trout stocks.

Government will, through the Department of Government Services and Lands, review its land use policy with the intention of placing a priority on developing land use plans for areas of high user conflict.

Government will review its overall hunting policy and regulations, including, but not limited to the following issues:

1. re-reinstating the big game shooting test; and,
2. possibly requiring non-Canadian citizens to use a guide when hunting small game.

Government will hold public consultations on the issue of on Sunday Hunting and consider whether: (i) to continue the existing ban; (ii) to allow Sunday Hunting for part of the year; or, (iii) to allow Sunday Hunting throughout the entire season.

Government will direct the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation to evaluate and report to Cabinet on issues related to the T'Railway. These include conflicting uses, the timing of trail development and trail safety.

Government will conduct further consultation regarding the possible introduction of a Conservation Stamp. Any funds raised under such a program would go strictly to conservation projects and be administered at arms-length from Government.